Thames Science Center

JUNE-JULY 1970

NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

JUNE-JULY 1970 VOLUME VI NO. 6

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THAMES SCIENCE CENTER, INC.
622 WILLIAMS STREET
NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT 06320

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JUNE and JULY

The Month of NESTING WARBLERS

June and July are the months to look for the resident warblers. Last month I mentioned the difficulties that warbler identification presented. If you still want to try to figure them out then continue reading this article.

By the time you read this, spring migration will be over and those warblers that do not nest here will have moved on, leaving a smaller number of resident birds. Having all summer to look for these particular warblers will give you a chance to thoroughly learn them before the fall migration. Separating them into the habitats we would find them in further aids in identification.

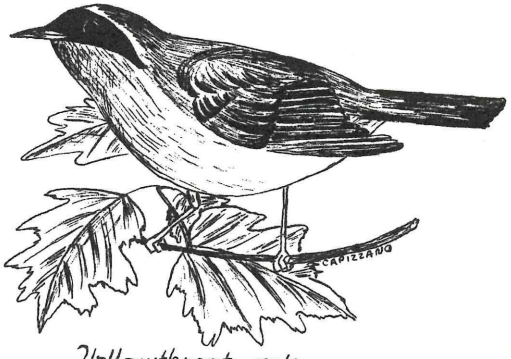
Black-and-White Warbler, male

A dry upland woods is the home of the black-and-white warbler. Striped with black and white and behaving more like a nuthatch than a warbler, he is perhaps the easiest warbler to learn and one of the most common. If we come to a brook and swampy area in the woods, then we should look for two more species-- the ovenbird and the hooded warbler. Neither of these stray far from water. The male hooded warbler is all yellow with a black hood surrounding his yellow face. The ovenbird looks like a miniature thrush. It stays on or near the ground and walks slowly along. It has a brown back and a white chest that is spotted with brown.

Chestnut - Sided Warbler

An open field surrounded by woods will attract the chestnut-sided warbler to the woodland edge. It is easily recognized by its yellow cap and chestnut colored stripe along its white sides.

Shrubs in a field as well as the woodland edge will attract four kinds of warblers that are all basically yellow in color. These are the yellowthroat, yellow warbler, prairie warbler, and blue-winged warbler. Each of these birds has a mark or two that will easily identify him. The yellow warbler is our only warbler that appears entirely yellow from a distance. There is no black or white on it. Seen close-up, the male will have orange stripes on his chest. The prairie warbler is the only one of the four with black striping on it. These stripes are easily seen along its sides. The blue-winged warbler has no black stripes, two white stripes on each wing, and a thin black line through the eye. The yellow bird with a black mask on his face giving him the appearance of a bandit (or the Lone Ranger) is the yellowthroat.



Yellowthroat, male

Finally, a warbler that is found in woods or brushy fields is the redstart. Its striking pattern of black with large red-orange patches on the tail and sides readily identify him.

Try finding these warblers this summer. If you learn these, you are well on your way to learning them all.

The June-July CALENDAR

June is the month of hot days and nights.

June 2 . . . Honeybees begin to swarm.

June 10 . . . Cow-wheat flowers in large numbers in our woodlands.

June 11-20 . . . If you were still on Standard Time the sun would rise at 4:06 A. M. --the earliest time of the year.

June 13 . . . Tulip Trees open their large and beautiful flowers.

June 19 . . . The Full Hot Moon rises.

June 20 . . . Summer begins at 2:43 P. M.

June 19-23 . . . The longest days of the year--15 hours and 19 minutes.

July is the month of thunderstorms and insect sounds.

July 5 . . . Believe it or not, the fall shorebird migration begins.

July 5 . . . Butterfly weed flowers in fields.

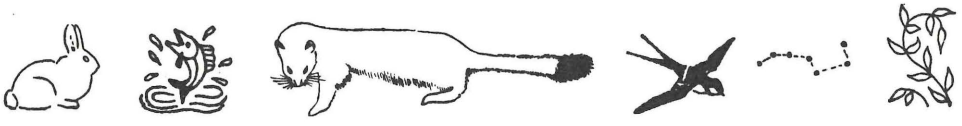
July 12 . . . Goldenrod flowers in our fields

July 14 . . . Cicadas begin calling--summer is over half completed.

July 18 . . . The Full Buck Moon.

July 26 . . . Turkscap lilies are in flower.

July 29 . . . Katydids begin calling at night.



FOOTNOTES TO NATURE

by MARY JEAN DEWIRE

MOUNTAIN LAUREL

One day last summer, as I was driving along I95, I noticed bright green shrubs growing abundantly in the woods alongside the highway. Each shrub was covered with pretty pinkish-white flowers. As a newcomer to the State, I was particularly impressed by the beauty and abundance of the plant. When I asked its name I was told that this was mountain laurel, Connecticut's State Flower.

Mountain laurel is a handsome shrub with a round-topped head, short crooked trunk, stout forking branches, slender glossy evergreen leaves, and, in late spring, large loose clusters of rose-colored to white flowers. It usually grows from 3 to 15 feet high and often forms dense thickets in rocky and sandy woods or recently cleared land. In the South, it sometimes reaches the size of a small tree. Strictly an eastern plant, mountain laurel ranges from New Brunswick to the Gulf of Mexico but has never crossed the Mississippi Valley. Other names for this plant are spoonwood, broad-leaved ivy, clamoun, and calico bush.

Because mountain laurel grows in places where bees and butterflies are not as numerous as in fields, the plant is specially designed to make certain that none of them escape without being a pollination messenger. The bee or butterfly has to enter a little pocket in order to sip nectar. This releases a tiny spring that dusts pollen on the hairy body of the insect. Clusters of tiny pollen balls then ride safely as he flies to the next flower where they are brushed off by the pistil as he enters for a drink.

Ants can never be pollination messengers so the mountain laurel has set traps to protect its nectar from

them. The flowers are mounted on hairy stems and the hairs are covered with a sticky substance. If the ant tries to reach the nectar, he soon finds himself wading through a field of glue which clings to his feet and holds him there until he dies.

Mountain laurel is also no friend of the cattleman. In springtime, when the herd moves out to the range, this plant is the greenest thing in sight and is especially tempting after the long winter on dry fodder. Although the herd is kept moving, they manage to take one bite after another until suddenly several of them have an overdose and develop a sickness called "blind staggers". Fortunately, they usually recover in a day or two and once they are on the range seldom touch the poisonous laurel again.

On April 17, 1907, the Connecticut legislature declared mountain laurel to be our state flower. It was selected for the "beauty of its blossom and foliage . . . its sturdy and abundant growth in the state, and its general popularity".

I think you would all agree that this was an excellent choice.

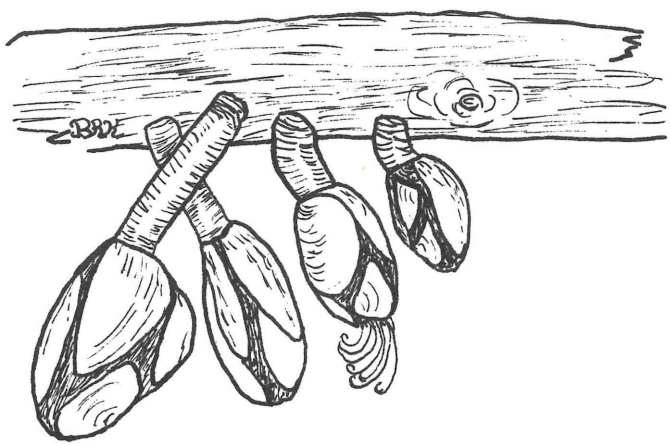
Photo by R. Dewire

ALONG THE SHORE

by BARBARA KASHANSKI

THE GOOSENECK BARNACLE

Last month I wrote about a familiar group of crustaceans called rock barnacles (genus Balanus) which are the best known barnacles along our shores. Another very common but not so familiar barnacle found here in Connecticut and all over the world is the Gooseneck Barnacle (genus Lepas). Sometimes it is known as the ship barnacle because that is where it is usually found--on the bottom of ships. Sometimes these little animals grow so thickly that they slow down the speed of the boat on which they are attached and then the bottom has to be scraped. For this reason, not many sailors like this small crustacean. Since ships are their first choice as a permanent home, although they also settle on floating logs, the gooseneck barnacle is a great traveler. Ships coming in from lands many miles apart have the same species of barnacles on them so that this group of barnacles cannot be considered native of any one area.



The name gooseneck comes from the long neck-like stalk that supports the five piece grayish shell. The shell is usually 1 to 2 inches long and the "neck" can be anywhere from $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch to 12 inches long! The length of the neck often depends on how crowded together the barnacles are. If many grow in the same area, the neck stretches out to place the shell in an open patch of water so that the feathery feet can wave small food particle towards the shell.

A long long time ago these barnacles were called goose barnacles. It was believed that geese were hatched from the shells which look a little bit like eggs. A man by the name of Gerard wrote a book in 1597 about plants and in the appendix of this scientific achievement there is a picture of the shells of the goose barnacle growing on a tree with geese falling from them and then swimming around in the water below!! Something tells me that back in 1597 someone had an awfully good imagination or very poor eyesight.

OUR DOUBLE ISSUE: As was mentioned in our January Newsletter, increasing printing costs have resulted in our combining our four summer newsletters into two issues. In addition to our June-July issue the next one will combine August and September. We hope in the future to find a way to defray the extra costs and go back to printing our NATURALIST NOTEBOOK on a monthly basis.

ARTICLES OF ADULT INTEREST

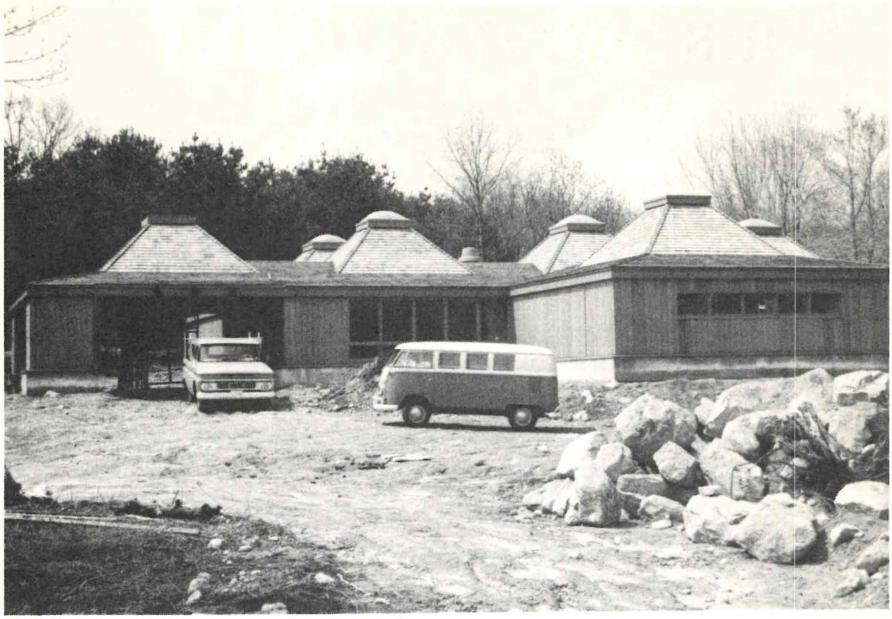
We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook .... Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible ....

CENTER HOURS: We plan to begin moving into our new building during the summer months and will spend much of our time setting up new exhibits. Because of this, the museum portion of our current building will not be open to the public. Office hours will be from 1:00 to 5:00 P.M. on weekdays and we will be closed on weekends.

NATURE FESTIVAL: The Nature Festival will be held on June 20 and 21 at the Connecticut Arboretum. Tickets will be available at the entrance. The charge is $1.00 for adults and $.50 for children under 16 for any of the three half-days. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to attend this weekend. Not only will you have an enjoyable time learning about the wonderful world of nature, but you will be aiding the Center in one of its major fund raising events.

FRIEND OF THE CENTER: Mrs. Elizabeth Noyes has been added to our growing list of members that have become "Friends of the Thames Science Center".

SUMMER DAY CAMP: The summer day camp run by the Science Center will begin on June 29th. If you have not received a brochure on the program please contact the Center and we will send you one.



OUR NEW BUILDING: The picture above clearly shows how far our building has progressed. We currently plan to begin moving into it at the end of the school year and will spend most of the summer getting exhibits prepared. Hopefully, we will be able to open the building to the public in late September.

We are still over $3,000 short of the contract price of the building and hope that our members will help us to raise this final amount.

CARDINAL-TITMOUSE CENSUS RESULTS: The annual Cardinal-Tufted Titmouse Census that was taken on Feb. 14 and 15 resulted in a total of 2,944 cardinals and 2,249 tufted titmice being found in Connecticut. This is almost double last year's figures of 1,741 cardinals and 1,349 titmice.

YOUR OWN NATURE JAUNT

by BOB DEWIRE

THE WACHUSETT MEADOWS WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Wachusett Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary is operated by the Massachusetts Audubon Society and is located in Princeton, Mass. To get there from here, take Route 52 north to its end in Webster, Mass. Here take Route 12 north through Oxford and then turn left on Route 56. Watch for a right turn onto Route 31 which will bring you to the Center of Princeton. Turn left at the Center, immediately take your first right and go about 3/4 of a mile until you come to a small sign to the sanctuary on the left side of the road telling you to turn right. Drive in until you come to the parking lot (there is a small parking fee for non-members of the Mass. Audubon Society).

The barn to the right of the parking lot has a nesting colony of cliff swallows in it. Their elaborate mud nests can be easily seen as well as the birds themselves which we rarely see down here. The large fields have bobolinks in them and bluebirds, least flycatchers, tree and barn swallows, and meadowlarks are all around them.

Cross the street from the parking lot and walk up the path through the fields and into the woods. This white pine and oak forest has many birds that we don't find in the summer along the coast. Included are brown creeper, red-breasted nuthatch, blackburnian warbler, pileated woodpecker, and hermit thrush. If you go in June, the chances are good that you will hear the song of the hermit thrush, considered by many to be the most beautiful of all bird songs in the United States. Also in this section of the sanctuary is the nest of a pair of goshawks. The nest location varies from year to year but if you come anywhere near it, you will know because both the

parents will come screaming out of the woods and circle around the area where you are.

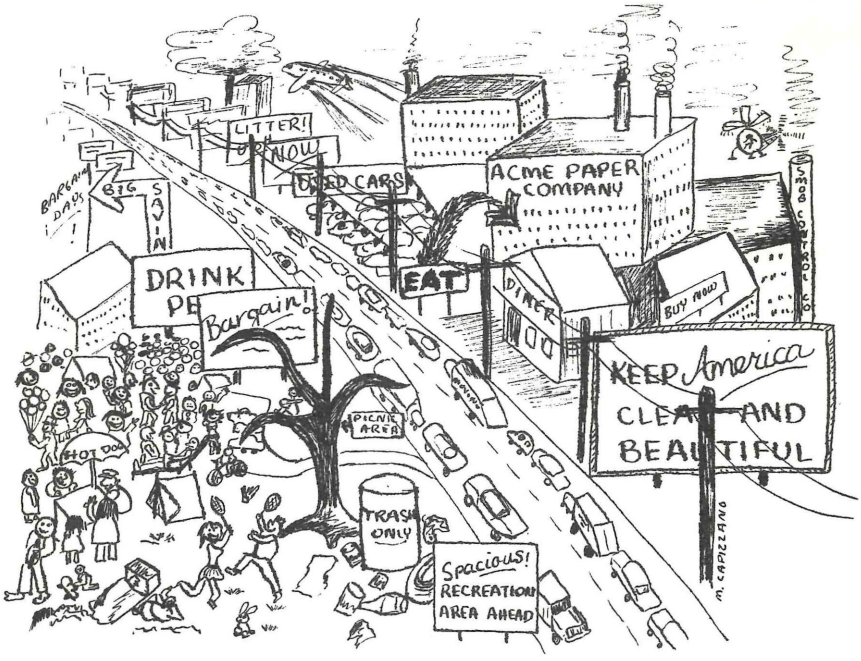
Return to the parking lot and go down the path in the field next to the lot. You will arrive at the beginning of a 2, 000 foot boardwalk that winds through a large swampland. Frogs and turtles and occasional water black, and garter snakes can be seen along the walk along with interesting bog plants such as the pitcher plant. Birdlife here includes the northern waterthrush, alder flycatcher, redstart and Canada warbler. At the end of the boardwalk is a small pine grove and just beyond this is an area where one may often find nesting white-throated sparrows, a familiar bird down here in winter but not in summer.

In addition to the sanctuary is nearby Mt. Wachusett which is the highest point in eastern Massachusetts (2, 006 ft.). It can be reached by going back to Princeton Center and continuing north on Route 31. Drive in the entrance and up to the summit. A spectacular view can be seen on a clear day. Boston's Prudential Building is to the east and Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire to the north. Another familiar winter visitor which we don't see in summer is usually found on the summit--the slate-colored junco. Other birds present include the phoebe and indigo bunting.

A most pleasant day can be spent in this area along with a chance to see a number of birds that aren't in the New London area in the summer.

An Introduction to Pollution

by MARTHA CAPIZZANO



While the public continues to demand materialistic, luxury goods, the public continues to destroy life by pollution. Pollution can be stopped. Pollution must be stopped. The present United States economy based on our capitalistic society depends upon rapid consumption of material goods. Most of these goods result in household garbage, trash and waste. Waste production is an integral part of our economy; consequently, this waste produces more pollution.

Besides this destructive impact on our environment, excess waste leads to an inevitable tax rise resulting from the astronomical cost of municipal disposal, most of which is inadequate. Much trash is used to fill in wetlands leading to the destruction of water storage basins, the contamination of drinking water and the obliteration of breeding grounds for our wildlife. Open burning and incineration emit air pollutants, but the creation of dumps as alternatives closes parks, elimi-

nates valuable open space and produces breeding grounds for rats and disease.

To alter this very grim but realistic system and to insure a life that is worth living in the future, we must develop an "ecological conscience". We must comprehend that the Earth is the one known planet to sustain life; that it is one physical body characterized by interrelationship, interaction and interdependence of all living things with their environment and with each other. Misuse of our environment has, and will continue, to destroy life . . . . including Man.

If the environment is for the people--if people pollute the environment--if people are to survive--then it is time for people to eliminate such destruction personally, and stop blaming industry and the government as causes of pollution. Industry and government will continue to work without change unless we, the people, change our demands for their products and services.

In general we don't have to use products which despoil our environment. By refusing to use ecologically unsound products, we can force manufacturers to alter their products. We can force stores to bring back returnable bottles and to stop excess packaging. We can convince legislators to pass laws that will eliminate the "right" for these evils to persist.

Ultimately we can again have a clean, healthy and aesthetic environment.

The next issue of the Naturalist Notebook will continue this theme of pollution with specific suggestions on what you, the people can do.

CONNECTICUT CREATURES

by MIKE WALKER

THE CICADA

There are probably few animals more a part of the hot, sunny weeks of mid-summer than the cicadas. These insects, often mistakenly called locusts, are among the loudest noisemakers of the insect world. They are heavy bodied creatures, up to two inches in length, with silvery, transparent wings that extend beyond the end of their abdomen. Cicadas are usually black, brown, or dark green with tracings of light brown or yellow over their thorax. The adult males have two pairs of membranes on the underside of the abdomen. These plates are vibrated to produce the characteristic buzzing call which is designed to attract the female.

During late summer, suing her sharp ovipositer, the female cicada deposits several eggs in slits under the bark of twigs. When the eggs hatch, the emergent cicadas drop to the ground, burrow in, and begin the longest period of their life as underground grubs. During this larval stage they feed by sucking juices from the roots of plants.

The cicada that is common in our area spends almost two years underground, molting several times as it grows. Then, during the summer, it digs out and climbs a short distance up the stem of a plant or trunk of a tree. It sets its crab-like front claws firmly in the bark, a slit opens along its wings unfold and dry, and then flies off to seek a mate. In the adult form, cicadas usually survive less than a month.

FIELD NOTES

April 15--PURPLE MARTINS arrive at Barn Island.

April 18--BLOODROOT and HEPATICA flowered at Hidden Acres; BANK SWALLOW and PALM WARBLERS at Napatree Point.

April 23--INDIGO BUNTING in Old Lyme.

April 25--AMERICAN TOADS were calling in ponds and MARSH MARIGOLD flowered in the Arboretum. First arriving birds were BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER and ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW in the Arboretum.

April 26--First arrivals included a GREEN HERON in Stonington, SPOTTED SANDPIPER and CHIMNEY SWIFT in Mystic, and BROAD-WINGED HAWK in Waterford.

April 27--A very early CRESTED FLYCATCHER was seen in Westerly, R.I., BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER and CATBIRDS were in Mystic and a BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER was seen in Stonington.

April 28--A young GREAT HORNED OWL was seen at Barn Island and a HOUSE WREN was at Mitchell's Woods.

April 29--PURPLE TRILLIUM flowered in the Arboretum and NASHVILLE WARBLER and OVENBIRD were there. A MAGNOLIA WARBLER was in Stonington and an ORCHARD ORIOLE was in West Mystic.

April 30--JACK-IN-THE-PULPIT flowered in the Arboretum and HOODED and BLUE-WINGED WARBLERS and a WOOD THRUSH were seen there. A WHITE-EYED VIREO was at the Science Center's New Building site and 3 COMMON TERNS were at Napatree Point.

May 1--A BALTIMORE ORIOLE was in Essex and a PINE SISKIN was still at a feeder in Mystic.

May 2--SHADBUSH flowered at the Peace Sanctuary and a SCARLET TANAGER was seen there. YELLOW WARBLERS were everywhere and a PARULA WARBLER was seen in Waterford.

May 3--At Barn Island a LOUISIANA HERON, GRASSHOPPER SPARROWS, and LONG-BILLED MARSH WRENS were seen. A late OLDSQUAW was seen off Mystic Island and a CAPE MAY WARBLER was at Magonk Point.

May 4--The first warblers really arrive with BLACK-THROATED BLUE, PRAIRIE, HOODED, CANADA, and REDSTARTS all seen. A VEERY and RED-EYED VIREO were at the Peace Sanctuary.

May 5--A WARBLING VIREO was seen in Essex.

May 6--Late EVENING GROSBEAKS were seen in Waterford, a SORA RAIL was walking along a road in Waterford and 3 WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS were at Matunuck, R. I.

May 7--LEAST TERNS were at Galilee, R. I.

May 8--WHIPPOORWILLS were calling in Waterford.

May 9--A large "wave" of warblers were in the Arboretum including TENNESSEE, WORM-EATING, and BLACKPOLL. LEAST SANDPIPERS and LESSER YELLOW-LEGS were at Harkness Park.

May 10--A late SLATE-COLORED JUNCO was at the Peace Sanctuary, 3 SOLITARY SANDPIPERS were seen along River Road in Mystic and a rare BREWSTER'S WARBLER was seen in Waterford.

May 11--BOBOLINKS arrived at Harkness Park, a NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH was at Mitchells Woods and a nesting pair of RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS was found in Old Lyme.

May 12--A BAY-BREASTED WARBLER was in the Arboretum.

May 13--A very rare KENTUCKY WARBLER was in the Arboretum along with a WILSON'S WARBLER. RED CROSSBILLS are still coming to a feeder in Niantic.

Contributors to this column were: Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Martha Capizzano, Carol Chappell, Bob and Mary Jean Dewire, Helen Gilman, Virginia Hatchell, Rick Holloway, Barbara Kashanski, Audrey King, Sam Knox, Mary Laffargue, Rose Levitt, Walter Moran, Eloise Saunders, Mrs. Samuel Strong, Mike Walker, Linda Williams and Tom Wolfe.

Activities for June and July

The Science Center's Summer Environmental Science Study Day Camp for children in Grades 1 to 6 begins June 29th.

June 10... 6:30 P.M. Peace Sanctuary. A trip through the woods as evening comes. Meet at the entrance on River Road.

June 17... 6:30 P.M. Harkness Park. Life in a marsh and at the shore. Meet at the parking lot.

June 20 and 21... The Science Center's Nature Festival Write for a brochure if you did not receive one.

July 8 ... 6:30 P.M. Barn Island. A summer evening at a salt marsh. Meet at the State Boat Landing.

July 22... 6:30 P.M. Harkness Park. Back to the park to see what has happened in a month. Meet at the parking lot.

As we went to press, the New London County Bird Club's summer field trip schedule had not been issued. By calling the Center in June we will be able to supply that information.

We Need Your Active Membership and Support

THAMES SCIENCE CENTER

622 WILLIAMS ST., NEW LONDON, CONN. 06320

Phone: 443-4295

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ROBERT C. DEWIRE – *Naturalist*
MICHAEL WALKER – *Curator*

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The Thames Science Center is a nonprofit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

The active support of children and adults in the Science Center, its programs, activities and efforts is earnestly solicited.

ROBERT DEWIRE
Editor

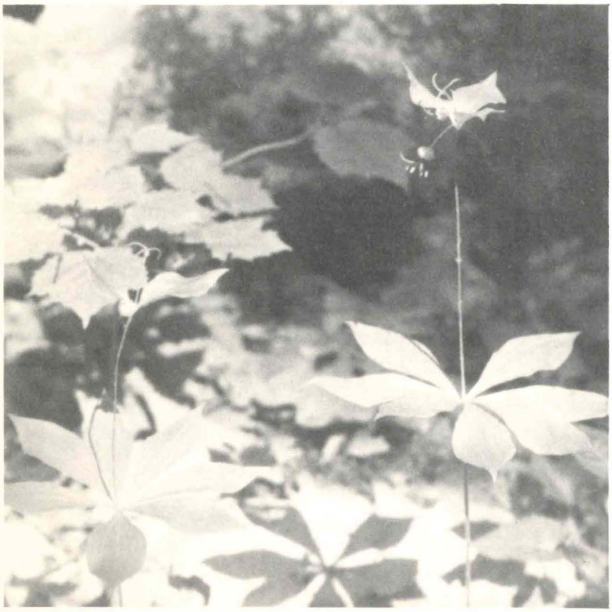

Photo by R. Dewire

JOIN US ON OUR EVENING NATURE WALKS